THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) In March this year, during the 2nd SAARC Information Minister's conference held at Islamabad, the Pakistan media carried a report indicating that the Pakistan Interior Minister had extended an invitation to the Union Home Minister, Shri L.K. Advani. There was also a suggestion in these reports, that the Pakistan Interior Minister proposed discussions on the issue of de-escalation of tensions with India and on the list of 20 fugitives from law. Subsequently, a senior Pakistan Interior Ministry official was also quoted in the media confirming the fact that such an invitation had indeed been extended.

Pakistan leaders frequently indulge in such propagandist ploys, especially during international conference in their attempt to divert international attention from Pakistan's continued sponsorship and involvement with cross border terrorism in India. Pakistan also seeks to divert attention from the fact that it has not taken any action on the list of 20 fugitives from law, handed over to them on 31st December, 2001.

Government have consistently stated their commitment to establishing good neighbourly ties with Pakistan, and for this purpose to resume the Composite Dialogue that seeks to build trust and confidence, establish a stable structure of cooperation and address outstanding issues. Pakistan must end its sponsorship of cross border terrorism and take urgent action on the list of 20 fugitives from law so that appropriate conditions for a meaningful dialogue process are created.

Ratification of Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty with America

3878. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 1248 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 14th March, 2002 and state:

(a) whether Government propose early ratification of the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty signed by the two countries; and

(b) if so, the measures taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Government has ratified the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters between India and the United States of America when the President of India signed the instrument of ratification on 22nd March, 2002.

This Treaty adds one more legal instrument to the existing bilateral Extradition Treaty for dealing with criminals and fugitives, as stated in answer to the Unstarred Question 1248 given in the Rajya Sabha on 14th March, 2002.

Indian emigrants in Pakistan

3879. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indian emigrants in Pakistan and *vice-versa*;

(b) whether termination of the Train and Bus services have affected/will affect these people badly; and

(c) if so, the alternative arrangements Government had made/ proposed to make in order to help these people?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) For historical and family related reasons, there has been continued emigration between India and Pakistan. Passenger travel between the two countries, including for such persons, continues to be possible via air routes that transit through third countries.

In order to assist those Pakistan nationals, who entered India on valid visas, but could not return to Pakistan because of the termination of bus and train services on 1st January 2002, Government permitted, as a special case, the exit of these Pakistan nationals through the Wagha border checkpost, or by air routes to Pakistan transiting through third countries.